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PAGE 01 STATE 094845

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SUBJECT: NEW YORK TIMES EDITORIAL

FOLLOWING EDITORIAL ENTITLED "NATO TANK TRAP" APPEARED IN
THE APRIL 19 EDITION OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

1. IN 1974, JAMES R. SCHLESINGER, THEN UNITED STATES
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, AND WEST GERMANY'S DEFENSE MINISTER,
GEORG LEBER, AGREED ON COMPETITIVE TRIALS OF A NEW
AMERICAN TANK VS. GERMANY'S PROJECTED LEOPARD II. THE
GENERAL UNDERSTANDING WAS THAT THE WINNER WOULD BE
SELECTED AS THE MAIN BATTLE TANK FOR BOTH COUNTRIES.

2. WITH NATO NATIONS SLATED TO REPLACE 10,000 TANKS IN
THE 1980'S, AT A COST OF MORE THAN 10 BILLION DOLLARS,
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PAGE 02 STATE 094845

CO-PRODUCTION OF A SINGLE MODEL PROMISED GAINS IN ECONOMY

AND EFFECTIVENESS THAT WOULD HAVE DWARFED ANY PREVIOUS EFFORT AT ARMS STANDARDIZATION IN THE QUARTER-CENTURY OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION. TWO YEARS LATER, THE COMPARATIVE EVALUATION IS STILL SCHEDULED FOR NEXT FALL, BUT THE PENTAGON IS RAPIDLY BACKING AWAY FROM ANY IMPLIED COMMITMENT TO BUY THE LEOPARD II TANK, EVEN IF IT SHOULD PROVE SUPERIOR.

3. THE AMERICAN ENTRY WILL BE CHOSEN THIS SUMMER FROM TWO RIVAL MODELS DEVELOPED BY GENERAL MOTORS AND CHRYSLER, AND THE ARMY IS ARGUING THAT IT MUST GO INTO EXPENSIVE ADVANCED ENGINEERING DEVELOPMENT OF ITS TANK AS SOON AS THE CHOICE IS MADE. THIS WOULD BE MONTHS BEFORE ITS COMPETITIVE EVALUATION AGAINST THE LEOPARD II IS COMPLETED. ADVANCE EXPENDITURES OF THAT KIND COULD ONLY PREJUDICE THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE 3,300 TANKS THE UNITED STATES ARMY PLANS TO BUY BY 1990 WOULD BE LEOPARDS.

4. THE WEST GERMANS, FOR THEIR PART, ARE BEGINNING TO ARGUE THAT THE AMERICAN TANK WILL BE UNSUITABLE TO COUNTER A NEW SOVIET TANK. IT IS EVIDENT ON BOTH SIDES THAT LABOR AND INDUSTRY PRESSURE AND THE PAROCHIAL INTERESTS OF THE MILITARY SERVICES ARE GETTING IN THE WAY OF THE FAR-SIGHTED SCHLESINGER PLAN FOR A NATO-WIDE COMMON MARKET IN ARMS PRODUCTION TO CURB COSTS AND ADVANCE STANDARDIZATION.

5. NATO NATIONS ARE NEWLY COMMITTED TO BUY DOLS TWO BIL. OR MORE OF F-16 FIGHTERS FROM THE UNITED STATES ON TOP OF BILLIONS OF DOLLARS WORTH OF OTHER ARMS; BUT THE UNITED STATES HAS YET TO MAKE THE KIND OF MAJOR PURCHASE FROM EUROPE THAT WOULD TURN THIS TRADE INTO THE "TWO-WAY STREET" THE ALLIES LONG HAVE BEEN DEMANDING. EVEN A \$30 MILLION PURCHASE OF MACHINE GUNS FROM BELGIUM, INSTEAD OF MAINE, HAS SET OFF A CONGRESSIONAL OUTCRY.

6. THE AMERICAN DEFENSE BUDGET NOW BEFORE CONGRESS TOTALS \$113 BILLION AND THAT ENORMOUS SUM IS SCHEDULED TO RISE TO \$150 BILLION BY 1981. AGAINST THAT BACKDROP, UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 STATE 094845

THE SAVINGS ATTAINABLE THROUGH LONGER RUNS OF STANDARDIZED NATO EQUIPMENT CANNOT BE IGNORED. MOREOVER, NATO COMBAT EFFECTIVENESS IS NOW GREATLY REDUCED BY THE NATIONALLY OPERATED LOGISTICS SYSTEMS REQUIRED TO SUPPLY DIFFERENT SPARE PARTS AND AMMUNITION FOR ALL THE DIVERGENT TYPES OF EQUIPMENT USED BY NATO DIVISIONS AND AIR WINGS. IN CONTRAST, THE WARSAW PACT FORCES ARE STANDARDIZED ON SOVIET EQUIPMENT.

7. THIS IS A MATTER FAR TOO IMPORTANT TO LEAVE ANY LONGER IN THE HANDS OF THE AMERICAN AND WEST GERMAN PENTAGONS. A TOP-LEVEL POLITICAL DECISION IS NEEDED NOW TO COMMIT THE TWO COUNTRIES IN ADVANCE OF THE APPROACHING TANK TRIALS TO CO-PRODUCE THE BETTER TANK, WHICHEVER ONE IT IS.

SHOULD EDITORIAL RESULT IN PRESS INQUIRIES YOU MAY DRAW ON THE FOLLOWING GUIDANCE:

1. THE LEOPARD II WILL BE TESTED WHEN IT BECOMES AVAILABLE, PROBABLY ABOUT SEPT 1976. AFTER TESTING A DECISION WILL BE MADE WHETHER TO CONTINUE WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNITED STATES XM-1 TANK PROTOTYPE OR SHIFT TO THE LEOPARD II DESIGN. NEITHER WEST GERMANY NOR THE UNITED STATES HAS AGREED TO AN EVALUATION BETWEEN THE LEOPARD II AND THE XM-1 ON A "WINNER TAKE ALL BASIS". HOWEVER THE UNITED STATES HAS SAID THAT IF THE LEOPARD II PROVES TO BE A CLEARLY SUPERIOR DESIGN AND OF COMPARABLE COSTS CONSIDERING ALL FACTORS, THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE WOULD BE PREPARED TO RECOMMEND ADOPTION OF THAT DESIGN FOR COMPLETION OF DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCTION IN THE UNITED STATES.

2. THERE IS ALSO THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE EVENTUAL PROGRAM BETWEEN THE LEOPARD II AND THE XM-1 COULD LEAD TO SOME COMMONALITY IN SUB-SYSTEMS. AS PART OF THE EFFORT OF THE TWO COUNTRIES TO SHARE TANK TECHNOLOGY THE UNITED STATES, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS ALREADY MADE AVAILABLE TO THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY THE TECHNOLOGY FOR THE FIRE CONTROL EQUIPMENT AND THE NIGHT VISION EQUIPMENT THAT IS PRESENTLY BEING CONSIDERED

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PAGE 04 STATE 094845

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